

July 25, 2021

Dear Friends,

I am sure you have heard of the turmoil in South Africa which started on Saturday the 10th of July. There were several days of uncontrolled looting and destruction of businesses. This took place in and around the two largest cities of Johannesburg and Durban. The greatest rampages were spread throughout the province of KwaZulu Natal, where Durban is located. These were frightening days as the magnitude of the theft and damage threatened not only the economic structure of the country but also the political stability of the ruling party. The anger of those suffering the loss of their businesses, the fear of the minority groups who were being physically threatened, and the long term racial tensions brought the possibility of civil war. Thankfully the South African president issued a state of emergency on the third day and released the National Defense Force to help the overwhelmed police. Meanwhile, those not involved in the rampage, the majority of the population, united to protect the remaining malls and major infrastructures. Prayer requests for South Africa were sent around the world on social media and by God's grace, this planned effort to destabilize the country was foiled. Community members worked hand-in-hand to clean-up. Police made arrests. And companies quickly restocked and made food and medical supplies available. By Monday the 19th many were back to work. But hundreds if not thousands of small businesses will never reopen. The economy was deeply hurt and in a country with 30% unemployment, many more are suddenly out of work. Tensions and fears are still very real, yet we are very thankful that there were no deaths among our contacts nor damage to our churches.

All of this happened in the midst of a tight national lock-down due to a very high COVID infection rate. The Delta strain was and is taking a considerable toll in lives. Lighter restrictions went into effect today so churches are now allowed to meet if they choose to do so, but are restricted to a maximum of 50. Grace Amanzimtoti is meeting but our planned area-wide youth camp and our annual Vacation Bible Schools have been cancelled.

In the widespread crisis, two of our ministries in Durban went into high gear to minister to physical and spiritual needs. **First**, Crossroads Community Church and Grace Baptist Amanzimtoti immediately initiated food delivery to church families in townships and rural areas hard hit due to lack of open stores, no transportation, and no employment. One of our 7 Rivers Outreach missionaries, working at Grace, Kelly Smith, submitted this report:

"Through the helping hands of many groups, 7 Rivers Outreach was able to distribute emergency food parcels to several remote communities. We started by visiting the homes of church members to discuss who in their communities were in greatest need. Most homes receive some form of monthly social grant which enables them to shop in bulk. But their challenge is to make it until the next month without running out of food. Most families are unable to last that long with many mouths to feed. Two days ago, when we last delivered food, there were several homes which had completely bare cupboards. One family took me to the area where they had been grinding up their chicken feed so they could try to make a meal from it.





A semi-truck loaded with food donated from sister churches in Johannesburg travelled through the night, protected by several armed patrol vehicles, to deliver staples that were redistributed to several churches having benevolent ministries. Many missionaries from Grace and Crossroads, alongside of our national pastors, spent the day packing hundreds of boxes of food to distribute to those in greatest need. It was an amazing experience to work alongside so many, united with Christ as our Lord, to reach the nations. We have another 200 food boxes that we will be delivering over the next week. The contents of these boxes are rice, corn meal, cooking oil, canned fish, canned beans, soup mix, and bars of soap."

Second, the radio ministry of Crossroads, named The Sound Doctrine Hub, took to the air with messages dealing with the Christian hope in the midst of a national crisis. This week they boosted messages of live broadcasts on the ministry's Facebook page and had an extra 45,000 visits to the page with over 3,000 of these listening to the messages. They also signed a contract with a new station for a once-a-week hour-long program. Sound Doctrine Hub is now on five different stations covering all the greater Durban area with live inter-active teaching. One of the weekly programs specifically addresses young adults. Kathy Ishler, one of our ABWE missionaries who works with this church and its radio ministry, supplied this report:

"There really is no definitive way to know how much God has used this tool for His glory. We do know that all fifty who are presently attending our daughter church, Sound Doctrine Fellowship, came as a result of hearing Pastor Nkosi on the radio. There have been nineteen students taking Biblical training courses due to the radio ministry. More than twenty people have made a public confession of their faith in Christ, but only God knows how many people have been touched with the Gospel in the privacy of their own home or car. That is what is so wonderful about radio, it is far-reaching."



It is through the radio ministry that Grace Baptist Amanzimtoti took steps to start a seminary to train Zulu men for pastoral ministry. That school was to open in January 2021 and I was scheduled to travel several times a year to Durban to teach. That has now changed. First, COVID lock downs prevented a decision of accreditation until mid-year. Second, when the decision was issued, the school was not granted the necessary accreditation. The church is now working with an online seminary in South Africa to provide the training these men need. We see this as a temporary solution until our own educational program is approved.

Meanwhile, I continue to teach and mentor some South Africans through online video conferencing, help with a number of our Durban ministries, and handle the finances for ABWE Durban and 7 Rivers Outreach. Please remember us in your prayers as we serve South Africa from Florida. Also pray for safety for our missionaries and national pastors. They need protection from COVID, enemies of the Gospel, and the temptations common to man and particularly harmful to those serving the LORD in leadership positions.

In His service, David & Virginia

2 Corinthians 4:15

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